

IRENICUM: OR AN ESSAY FOR UNION.

WHEREIN
Are Humbly Tender'd some proposals in order to some
nearer Union amongst the Godly of different Judgments.

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Quia conjungi poſſunt voluntates hominum in bono, quatenus unus ex parte non habent ſenſus conſentientes circa illa quæ pertinent ad bonum quod appetunt, idcirco diſſenſio opinionum circa illa quæ minus ſunt neceſſaria, quamvis perfectionem concordie impediatur, ipſi tamen concordie non repugnat, Philip. 3. 15, 16. Amef. Caſ. Conſc. lib. 5. Cap. 29. Theſ. 4.

Neceſſarium eſt ſtudium concordie. 1. ratione charitatis a qua ſuit, & quam fovet, promovet & implet. 2. ratione juſtitie cujus impedimenta removet. 3. ratione felicitatis tam communis quam private, quæ unitis viribus concordium bonorum facilius procuratur Idem Eod. Cap.

Opinionum varietas & opinantium unitas non ſunt advocata Mr. Boroughs of Heart diviſions.

————— *Siquid noviſſi rectius iſtis.
Candidus imperti, ſi non, bis utere mecum.*

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I R E N I C U M:

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W H E R E I N

Are humbly tender'd some Proposals in order to a Nearer Union amongst those of Different Judgments.

THose who have appeared studious of reformation in these Nations, have been unhappily subdivided into three Forms or Parties, Commonly known by the names of *Presbyterians*, *Independents*, and *Anti-pædo-Baptists*. Under each of which there be some who are judged by those that differ from them, to be truly Godly, and to have the root of the matter in them, as holding Christ the Head under these various Forms. Who being not yet united into one mind and Judgment, by conviction of error and mistake in those things

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wherein

wherein they differ, which nevertheless as we have seen through the Free-Grace of Christ, some instances of already, so we may hope for in some further measure, when those better times shall come, whereof the Lord hath said that he will give his People *one heart, and one way*: Mean while it may not be amiss, to try how near we can come together, supposing each party to remain unconvinced of any error in their way.

Now in order to this end it will be requisite to Consider concerning these three Judgments.

First, how far they agree. And then,

Wherein they differ. And then,

To make some proposals in order to some nearer and closer Union amongst them. Unto which Method we are led not out of any desire or delight to revive the mention of our differences, which we could wish had been prevented, or could now be buried in everlasting silence and oblivion: But because they are so publick that they cannot be hid, and because we are persuaded that a great part of our divisions hath arisen from misunderstandings of one another, and we cannot well proceed, or not with any great clearness and evidence of light, but rather as men groping in the dark to propound means and ways of Union, nor can we pass any just and well grounded Judgment upon what is propounded, if we do not in some measure understand and rightly apprehend the true State of the Controversies; therefore let us consider one another to provoke unto Love and to good Works.

The Agreements.

First Then, for the Agreements, they may be referred to four General Heads.

First, We do agree in the Fundamentals of Doctrine, in the Articles of the Christian Faith, as also in the Rules of a Christian Life; that this is so doth appear as by other Evidences, so by Comparing together the several Confessions of Faith. That of the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster* was approved and accepted in the same words both by the Church of *Scotland* in the year 1647. And so far as concerns matters of Faith or Doctrine, by the Churches of *New-England* also, as they have declared in the Preface to their

their Platform of Discipline, Published in the Year 1648. As also by the great Parliament of *England*, in the same Year 1648. And finally by the Congregational Churches in *England* in their general meeting at the *Savoy Anno* 1658. And the Confession of the Churches of the *Anti-pædo-Baptists* in *London* Published (*circiter*) 1650. Though not in the same Form of Words, yet upon perusal of it, we cannot say there is any fundamental difference appearing as to the substance of the matter of Doctrine, held forth therein.

If any objection be made concerning any particular Persons, as to fundamental unsoundness and Corruption of Judgment, or looseness and unholiness of Conversation. The Answer is, that there be some, yea, we hope many under each of these denominations, unto whom God of his Grace hath given the Spirit of a sound mind, and a Conversation adorning the Doctrine of God our Saviour. But men of Corrupt minds not holding the Head, but holding damnable Heresies that are *Devoratoria salutis*, are not included nor intended in these Proposals, no more than men of prophane lives. If there be any Persons or Societies either under these or any other Forms or ways of profession whatsoever, who do not agree in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith, or do not live Christian lives, doubtless the Lord doth not call his People to unite with such, but to bear witness against them.

2. This agreement in Faith and Holiness infers and carries along with it all the Duties of Charity and Christian Love, as Sympathy and Compassion towards the Saints in all their Sufferings and Afflictions, to relieve their wants and streights, &c. duties to be performed towards all, even to Enemies and the worst of men, when their necessities call for it, but more especially towards the Household of Faith, even to all the Saints, though differing, though erring in some lesser thing. Hither belongs a candid construction of all their actions and notions, interpreting every thing to the best sense, not taking an estimate of any whole party of Professors from some few inconsiderable Individuals, nor calculating the whole from the personal miscarriages of some, bearing with the infirmities of the weak, forbearing and avoiding unbrotherly and provoking terms and words, with many other things of the like nature, all which

which are the necessary effects and fruits of Cordial and Christian Love.

3. As to the matters of God's Worship: There is an Agreement so far as concerns the main Acts of natural Worship in the first Commandment *viz.* Prayer, Preaching, and hearing the Word, as also in the special time of publick Worship, the Christian Sabbath, for we all observe that day, and there is no scruple made of joyning together in Prayer and Preaching, and hearing one another, which accordingly is ordinarily practised amongst us in this City. Which as it is some further step towards Love and Union, so we have cause also to acknowledge it to the Lord, as a considerable Advance and increase of Light shining forth upon us in these present times, for it was a thing much scrupled in the former Age before the late Reformation by some whose Name and Sect hath disappeared, being worn out by the further progress of the Light and Work of Christ amongst us.

4. As to matters of Institution and Church-Worship, in the Second Commandment, here indeed it is that the difference lies, but yet there be some General Agreements even here also, at least in the Fundamentals of Worship. Instance may be given in Four Uniting Principles sufficient for a safe and well grounded Union.

1. We all agree that the Scripture is the Rule as in all other matters of Faith and Life, so likewise in the matters of God's Worship.

2. That the Lord hath appointed a Ministry in his Church, who are bound by their Office to Preach the Word, and to administer the Seals and Censures in his name.

That the Lord's Supper ought not to be administered promiscuously unto all, but "All Ignorant and ungodly Persons, as they are unfit to enjoy Communion with Christ, so they are unworthy of the Lord's Table, and cannot without great sin against him, whilst they remain such, partake of these Holy Mysteries

Confessi. Faith.
Cap. 30. of
the Lord's Sup-
per, propos. 4.

"Mysterick, or be admitted thereunto: This is a Truth of so great weight and evidence, that both *Presbyterians* and *Independents* have thought fit to insert it, in their Confession of Faith. And it is concluded in that Article of the Creed, the Communion of Saints. Yea the Episcopal Party hath born witness to it: "For they do affirm that the Visible Church is a Congregation of Faithful Men (therefore not of debauched Persons) where the Word of Christ is duely Preached, and the Sacraments be rightly Ministred. And at the ordination of Ministers they require a promise of them to exercise the Discipline of Christ. And if it be required what this Discipline is, they thus express their notion of it. "In the primitive Church (say they,) there was a godly Discipline, that at the beginning of Lent, such persons as were notorious sinners, were put to open penance and punished in this World that their Souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others admonished by their example might be the more afraid to offend. In the stead whereof, until the said Discipline may be restored again, (which thing is much to be wished) it is thought good that in your presence be read the General Sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners, and that ye should answer to every Sentence, *Amen*.

See the 39 Articles. Art. 27.

In the form of ordering Priests as Deacons.

Books of Con. Prayer, Communion against sinners.

Yet further they order Ministers thus to act in the admission of Persons to the Lord's Supper. "If any (say they) be an open and notorious evil Liver, so that the Congregation by him is offended, or have done any wrong to his Neighbours by word or deed, the Curate having knowledge thereof, shall call him and advertise him in any wise not to presume to come to the Lord's Table, until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former naughty life, that the Congregation may thereby be satisfied, which afore were offended. The same order shall the Curate use with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's Table until he know them to be reconciled. The Minister ought to admit the penitent Person to the Holy Communion, and not him that is obstinate

Rubrick before the Communion.

obstinate. Thus fully, thus expressly do even Episcopal men own and bear witness to this Truth.

4. There is this further Agreement, that the Ceremonies and other Episcopal Inventions in the worship of God are sinful and unlawful. Upon this Account, and in the Testimony of this truth, it is that we are all fellow sufferers and Brethren in Affliction at this day, under the Prelates who by their violence against us for the Truth and Testimony of these times, as well as by their Compliance with Rome and other evils, but chiefly by their Assiduity, in that good work of silencing Godly Ministers and imposing upon tender Consciences, do manifestly declare what Interest and what Spirit they are of, and how incapable and unwilling to unite with us.

There may be personal Love and Honour, due to some Individuals amongst them, especially to some who lived in former darker times before the day broke out upon them, and were indued with another and a better spirit than usually appeareth and looketh out in that form, *Even the Spirit of a sound mind*, and a good life, and brotherly love and tenderness towards tender Consciences: There is Christian Love and esteem due to such, as personally and individually considered, and we should be willing and ready to receive and unite with them in the Lord. As neither do we judge every Individual in the external Communion of the Church of Rome: But of the whole Bulk and body of them in their present Interest and Constitution, as also of the form it self as Complexly considered with all that is involved in the Bowels of it, there is not the same Reason.

But thus far in these four particulars at least, there seemeth to be a general Concurrence and Consent amongst the whole reforming Party, even in the matters of instituted Worship.

Secondly, And as for those Inquiries, what shall then be done for Union with such whose way of Worship doth exclude the Scripture and the Ministry, and who make promiscuous administrations and Superstitious Ceremonies, the condition of their Communion, Besides what hath been already hinted, we say further,

That the Scripture and the Ministry are things too precious to be parted with, for Union with any sort of men whatsoever, and the

the same we must needs say concerning the Christian Sabbath before mentioned. Moreover Communion with Scandalous Persons, and Conformity to the Ceremonies and Superstitious Vanities, are such hard conditions of Church Communion as cannot with a safe Conscience be accepted of. Therefore we humbly judge that the best expression of our Love to men of such Principles, and the best way and means for Union with them is this, to labour to reduce them and bring them off from the error of their way, and the rather, for that it is attended and accompanied usually with looseness and prophaneness, which whilst they do persist and continue in, and that in a day of so clear Gospel Light, and Liberty, as through Grace these Nations have enjoyed, it may well become all the People of God to say, *O my Soul come not thou into their secret, and unto their Assembly, my glory be not thou united.*

We have therefore omitted in this Essay for Union amongst those People of God, all such dead and blasted forms, out of which God is gone, and which are but streams and rivulets as it were of that dead Sea, *that Sea of Blood the Fish whereof dyeth.* Rev. 8. 8, 9. and Chap. 16. 3. *Not of that Christal Sea.* Rev. 4. 6. *Lively Images of the Beast.* Rev. 13. 14, 15. *Those names of men, and not of God's appointing.* Rev. 11. 13. *Plants which our Heavenly Father never Planted in his Church.* Mat. 15. 13. And which therefore in times and places of Reformation have been pluckt up, and cast forth, to the rejoycing of the upright in heart.

Thus much for the Agreements amongst the Reforming Parties.

The Differences.

Now for the matters in Difference, we mean still amongst those that seem to have their faces *Sion* ward, and to be studious of Reformation. Truly to consider what they are, may even make us ashamed of our divisions, that ever so great offences and distances in affection should arise from so small differences in opinion.

And First, between the *Presbyterians*, and *Independents*.

There be some Controversies sprung up between them of such a nature, as we do not judge it necessary to the present purpose, and scope of this paper largely to insist thereon. Whereof we may instance in three sorts, or kinds of Questions.

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1. Those

1. Those which seem to be rather Speculative, and in Logical terms than practical, which, unless Satan and Corruption have the managing of them, are not likely much to obstruct or stand in the way of this so much desired Union. As, for instance, that acute Question concerning the Universal Visible Church, which though the right notion of it gives a light and influence into the whole business of Church Discipline, and there is some discrepancy in the notions and apprehensions of Godly Learned Men about it, yet while the denying of the Universal Visible Church, is not improved to the denying of Communion of Churches, nor yet the asserting of it improved to the denying of particular Churches, so as to make Godly People *lye among the pots*, and live at a loose end, as *Lambs in a large place*, under no particular Pastoral charge, under no special oversight and inspection for their souls: whilst both sides do acknowledge both in their judgment and practice, not only the Universal invisible Church, about which there is no Controversie, but also particular Churches, and Communion of Churches, not only spiritual and mystical Communion by the same Spirit of Faith and Love, dwelling and working in them all, but also Visible Communion in the ordinances and outward dispensations of his Grace, all this may well suffice unto brotherly Love and Union. There is also some further dispute about this word (Church) about the Application of it to a whole Nation. Where Christianity hath obtained a Civil sanction and establishment in the Laws of the Land, as in those we call Christian States or Kingdoms, but if such a Kingdom be called a National Church, the matter is not great, if withal it be remembered and acknowledged, that Christ hath not tyed his Ordinances under the New Testament to any one place, as of old to the Temple, but hath appointed them to be dispensed in the several Congregations, and Assemblies of his people. These and other such like Questions, though they may and ought to be enquired and searched into, for every *Apex* of truth is precious, the least *Feta* thereof is not to be despised, as the very filings and dust of Gold is precious, yet being rather in terms and notions, and not so directly Practical, and Theological, as there is no just reason, so we hope in the Lord there is no great danger, they should discompose and disunite the Spirits of Godly learned and sober men, who are acted and influenced by the Spirit and grace of Christ in their debates and disquisitions.

2. Those

2. Those things also are not of present Consideration, which are the Judgement rather of particular Persons, than of the whole Party. As to give some few instances of many: Ordination of Pastors at large, and before Election *ad Ministerium vagum or sine titulo*, which our Brethren of Scotland, as well as of New-England doe not approve, though nevertheless they that do, if in all other things without exception, must be owned and numbred amongst the Lord's faithful Ministers, because they Minister to him and to his People in the Gospel of his Son. Moreover it is granted by all that it is no way fit, men should send themselves and run upon their own heads into the Ministry, but that they go forth unto that work by the judgment and encouragement of Godly Faithful Ministers of more ability and experience than themselves, *For the Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets*; who if they solemnly seek the Lord in prayer with them and for them, there can be no hurt in that. And if withal they lay their hands upon them, this cannot be matter of much offence to any. So that in the Issue all the difference remaining as to this point, is not about their passing through ministerial Tryal and approbation, but only about impowring them to Baptize and Administer the Sacraments in an unfixed way without any special relation to a particular flock or charge; for to Preach the Gospel, if they do attend upon that work as their particular Calling is generally granted to be lawful, and is ordinarily practised without offence, and to the good of Souls, by those we call *Lecturers*: Hither also not impertinently as not being the unanimous Judgment of any whole party, may be referred, the reasonings which have made so great a noise about *Parish Precincts*, which though some perhaps do religiously observe, and bind up themselves unto, yet there be others under every form, who make no scruple to transgress them. For not only the *Independents* and the *Presbyterians*, but the very *Papists*, and *Prelate-Protestants* have thought it lawful in the late times to receive those of their way from all the Parishes round about, who likewise have made no scruple to attend upon their ministry, and Communicate in the ordinances with them in their own way, when most of the publick places were in other hands. Whereby it may seem that no sort or sect of Christians at this day, in these Nations, do judge themselves necessarily involved in Church-Communion by their habitation.

However a Church, according to the Scripture being a Spiritual Body or Society, and the limits being part of the Essence or Constitution of such a Body, that therefore they must be Spiritual and of the same nature, and not merely humane as, is the division of Parishes is a notion which hath so great an appearance of Spiritual reason, that there must needs be a great measure of brotherly kindness and indulgence due to such as act upon it, if in all other things they walk without offence. Hither also lastly may be referred, and so let them be dismissed and forgotten whatever unbrotherly reproaches and charges of Schisme or Antichristianisme, &c. may have been used by some particular men of harsh and violent Spirits, but not approved by others of the same judgment, being men of wiser and cooler Spirits.

3. A Third sort of Questions not to be now insisted on is, the unhappy differences that have fallen out about State-matters, the effects whereof we feel at this day, which are and must be left quietly and peaceably with the Lord, and wherein perhaps we may all stand in some need of pardon and forgiveness, not only from God, but from one another. But the debate and discussion of all such things, and how to accommodate them, may be waved for the present, as either not very momentous, or not seasonable, or not likely to be much conducing to the present scope, which is healing and reuniting the Spirits of good men.

We find then the remaining differences which seem to require a present and more particular consideration, consist chiefly in three Things.

1. That from whence they have their respective denominations is about Classes and Synods. The *Presbyterians* conceiving as it is expressed by the Provincial Assembly of *London*, "That Jesus Christ hath laid down in his word a pattern of a Synod, yea of a Juridical Synod consisting of Governing Officers of divers Presbyterial Churches. The Congregational Men on the contrary hold, that Jesus Christ hath not subjected any Church or Congregation of his to any other superior Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction than unto

Jus div. C. 14.
P. 240.

Ames Bradshaw, Eng. Pur.
C. 2. Th. 3.

“ unto that which is within itself, so that if a whole Church or
 “ Congregation shall err in any matters of Faith or Religion, no o-
 “ ther Church or Spiritual Church Officers, have by any warrant
 “ from the Word of God, power to censure, punish or controul the
 “ same, but only to Counsel and advise them.

Now that this difference may not appear greater than indeed it is,
 we may do well to consider the Concessions on both sides.

For First we find that our Brethren of the Presbytery on the one
 side grant that a Church in an *Island*, or in a Pa-
 gan Country where it cannot conveniently associate,
 must not be denied intireness of Jurisdiction
 within itself. The Congregational Brethren on the
 other side grant the lawfulness and usefulness of
 Synods in the Church of God, and the account-
 ableness of particular Congregations thereunto.

The absolute unaccountableness whereof they do, even with de-
 testing expressions disclaim. So that when things are thoroughly
 examined, all the difference remaining as to this head seemeth to be
 only about the best way for regulation of Synods. For the Con-
 gregational men would have them to be Elective and occasional,
 not standing and permanent, and to go no further than the first re-
 move beyond the particular Congregation, but the subordination
 of Synods one unto another in greater and lesser Assemblies they
 stick at. And towards an erring Church they would not have
 them to put forth a formal act of Censure or excommunication, but
 only a sentence of non-Communion, whereby the difference is re-
 duced to a very narrow point, surely not wide enough to be a just
 Cause for breach of Love and distance of affection amongst Bre-
 thren.

Yea so near do these two Forms come together, and so narrow is
 the parting point that some of the Presbyterian
 judgment have said, “ They grant that which
 “ doth *tantamount*, and they differ but in some
 “ lesser things, and this disagreement (say they)
 “ shall not hinder us from any Christian accord
 “ with them in affection.

The *Independents* reciprocally profess them-
 selves to be for “ a *tender Presbytery*. And that

Prov. Aff.
Lond. Fur. div.
 C. 15. P. 251.

See the Apolo-
 getical narrat.

Mr. Marshall,
 Sermon on Rom.
 12. 4

Prov. aff. Fur
 div. minist. pre-
 face.

such

Mr. H. P. advice *prope fin.*

Mr. R. M. Ans.
to Mr. C. H.

such is that of the Churches in *New-England*: And so desirous of Union with their Brethren and so loth to differ, that some of the first who have appeared in that cause do approve and close with him; they answer, in drawing down the differences to the narrowest compass, and they write as do others generally of the same Judgment, in a moderate and Brotherly stile.

2. There is much Controversie also concerning the *rights* *Δικαιωματα* or first subject of the Power of the Keys, with the several proportions of power belonging respectively to the Presbytery, and to the Fraternity. A Subject worthy of deepest search, and which accordingly hath exercised the thoughts and pens of many. But we hope in the Lord that this difference upon a severe Consideration of it, will not be found so great, nor so difficult to be accommodated as may seem: for if there be, but a practical avoiding of the rocks and extreams on both hands, both of the Ecclesiastical Anarchy and confusion on the one hand, and of Ecclesiastical Tyranny and oppression on the other: If the Authority of the Eldership be secured that it be not devoured and swallowed up, by the Liberty of the Brotherhood, nor yet the Liberties of the Brethren by the power of the Elders, this is the substance of the matter, and in this we all agree:

For First it is agreed and granted by the *Independents*, that Christ hath placed the ruling power in the hands of his Officers only, and that the People are not the Rulers, but only the Ruled. For to make them all Rulers, and the Elders Cyphers, this is not the order of the Gospel which saith *Obeys them that have the rule over you, and submit your selves.* Hebrews 13. 17. *And we beseech you Brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake, and be at peace among your selves.* 1 Thes. 5. 12, 13. Therefore to cast aside the fear and reverence of them and their Authority, and so to give them but a painted power and empty titles, and to make them Rulers in name, but not in deed, this is such a Violation of Gospel order and casting off the Yoke of Christ, as must needs break the Churches peace, and open a gap to all contention and

and confusion. Any such exorbitant Independency of Carnal Liberty, and contentious confusion, our Brethren of the Congregational way, do neither plead for, nor practise, but disavow and disclaim.

And yet withal Secondly, it is agreed and granted by the *Presbyterians*, that the People are not to behave themselves as mere idle spectators, and persons altogether unconcerned in Church matters, but that they ought some way to Concur and consent at least in matters of chief weight and moment, as in the constituting of Officers, and in the receiving and ejecting of members, and consequently that they are to be acquainted with such transactions, to the end that if they have any thing to object or alledge, they may bring it in to the Elders to judge thereof. Thus much is granted and practised amongst our Brethren of the Presbytery. So that if both these be put together, it will appear that here is some good measure of practical Agreements, for which we are to bless God and to pray, that it may be further improved, though there may be some notional difference.

He that shall peruse and compare together Mr. Cotten of *New-England*, his Treatise of *the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, and Mr. Gillaspie of *Scotland*, his dispute against *English Popish Ceremonies*, will find them both of one heart and mind, as to this signal instance of the Peoples power and privilege, viz. the Right they have to Elect and choose their own Ministers. And it is a Truth so clearly asserted in the Scriptures of Truth, for they choose Deacons, *Acts* 6. And in the choice of an Apostle they went very far, *Acts* 1. 23. And they chose Elders by suffrage in every Church, *Acts* 14. 23. *Χριστιανισμὸς οὐκ ἐκ βίας καὶ ἐκ φόβου, ἀλλ' ἐκ ἑκούσίου καὶ ἐκ ἡμετέρας ἐκλογῆς, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἑκούσιου τοῦ λαοῦ, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἑκούσιου τοῦ ἐκκλησιασμοῦ.* Beza. And it is so abundantly and so constantly witnessed by the Saints and Martyrs, and by all our Protestant Divines against the Papists, and by our Brethren and Fathers, the old *Puritan Non-conformists* in all their Books and writings against the Prelates, and sealed with their manifold and faithful sufferings, that now in this height of Gospel light to relinquish it, would be a very retrograde motion in the work of Reformation, and bring the Sun as it were Ten degrees backward. And if any shall require and insist upon the relinquishment of it, we must ingeniously confess unto them, that we are loth to purchase our Union with them at such a Price. We must

must confess it upon his Account, who hath purchased the Liberties of his people with his own blood, and whose Royal Authority, and whose infinite wisdom hath thought fit to ordain in his last Will and Testament; therefore the People may not, must not be utterly excluded, we cannot, we dare not yield thereunto, howsoever their Concurrence may be manifested and expressed, whether by lifting up of hands, or by silence, or by other ways of voting, either more explicitly, or more implicitly, according to the various Circumstances, of Persons, Places and Times, which may admit of some variety, and so far as the Rule admits of any Latitude, we would not be too severe and narrow. In the testimony before quoted out of the 39 Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer, which are owned and subscribed even by the Episcopal men, and by all the Conforming Clergy, there is reiterated and express mention of the Congregation as interested and concerned in Church Affairs, both in the Seclusion of Impenitent Sinners, as Persons by whom *the Congregation is offended*, and in the open declaration of their repentance, *that so the Congregation may thereby be satisfied*, and they readmitted.

From all that hath been said as to this head, we hope, we may come to this result, that if we could but understand one another, there needs no further expedient, for the composing and reconciling of this Controversie.

3. There is also some difference about the subject of Baptism, and the extent as to the external dispensation of the Covenant of Grace sealed by it. The *Presbyterians* conceiving that it belongeth to all that profess the Protestant Christian Religion, and to their Children. The *Independents* restraining it only, to such Parents as besides their profession of the Christian Faith walk without offence, and so are judged worthy of the Lords Supper, and to their Children. The *Anti-pædo baptists* restraining it, yet further to the Exclusion of all Infants, as from the Covenant, so likewise from the Seal thereof, as belonging in their judgments, only to persons grown up to years of discretion upon their own personal profession of the Faith. And indeed this difference though not so much debated and written of as the former about Classical subordinations and Church Power, yet being a matter of daily practice, doth incur more into the observation and understandings of the Common People. The distance

distance being very conspicuous between this three-fold Judgment and practice of Baptizing almost all the Children in the Nation, and none at all, and none but such whose Parents are accepted as Godly unto full Communion.

Here then be three several ways, the distance whereof is in some measure understood. But yet in the help of Christ, let us try how near they may be brought together, reducing the differences to the narrowest point we can.

First Then, they that are counted largest, are not for Baptifmal administrations absolutely Universal, but they require a profession of the true Christian Faith at least. Moreover the *Independents*, who are counted somewhat narrow in this matter, yet they do not monopolize and impropriate Baptifm to themselves, as though it belonged only to those of their way: But they do profess and affirm, that if the Parents be such whose hearts God hath touched, though they walk not with us, if they be by other Saints and Ministers with whom they walk, Judged Godly, and found worthy of the Lord's Supper for themselves: They do acknowledge such Parents, under what Form soever, to be worthy also of that Blessed privilege of Baptifm for their Children.

But as to the Third opinion, that of the *Anti-pædo-Baptists*, here indeed lies the greatest difficulty, because it is thought by many, that in the true and unconstrained Consequences of it, it draws very deep, beside all the Prejudices that have arisen as to that Forms upon other pretensions and occurrences, that have hapned both at home, and abroad, too many to be here enumerated. And that it is indeed a matter of deeper Comprehension in all the Influences and Concernments of it, than we can wade into at this time, we must ingenuously confess to our dissenting Friends, but yet notwithstanding we must acknowledge also our want of light, and ability to evince and demonstrate any of these three Judgements, to be in its own nature, if singly considered, and by itself, a fundamental error. Therefore we humbly Judge that it is a duty incumbent on us in the Spirit of Gospel Love to bear with one another in it, till it please the Father of Lights, out of his Free-Grace and mercy to shine in upon us, and upon our differing Brethren with further and more Convicting light.

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But here be some other Questions concerning this great and Blessed ordinance of Baptism, wherein both the other Forms do fully agree in one and the same mind and Judgment against the *Anti-pædo-Baptists*. And concerning the manner of Administration which these conceive, ought to be by dipping or plunging the Body under water. The *Presbyterians* and *Independents* on the contrary hold that, "dipping of the Person into the water is not necessary, but Baptism is rightly

Confess. Anab.
prop. 39.

Confess. Faith
Cap. of Baptism
propos. 3.

Confess. Anab.
prop. 31.

"administred by powring or sprinkling water upon the Person. Also concerning the Administrator, the *Anti-pædo-Baptists* hold that it may be done by Disciples, being men able to Preach the Gospel. But the *Presbyterians*, and *Independents* concur that it doth belong peculiarly to the Office of the Ministry, and ought not to be dispensed, but by a Minister of the Gospel lawfully Called.

As for such as make Baptism in their way the very Essence and Form of the Church, this is indeed to un-church all others beside themselves, and so puts a Bar upon Church Union with them, as being no Churches; But the severity of this dis-uniting principle, as we cannot find it expressly asserted in their Confession of Faith before mentioned, so we know some of that way who do disown it, and affirm that Baptism doth not enter the definition of a Church, but they make Union and Communion with Christ the foundation of Church-Communion, which as it is a more Scriptural, so it is a more Brotherly, and a more uniting principle.

These therefore are the main things in difference, and under dispute amongst the three Forms, omitting only some few things which either seem to be of Lesser moment, or cannot well be affixed to any of the three Forms or Parties, as the Judgment of the whole Party, or else are implied and included in these which have been mentioned.

Proposals.

And now having seen and taken this short survey of the Controversies agitated amongst professors under these several Forms, we may with the more clearness proceed to consider, whether there might not be some nearer closure and Union than yet hath been, and that without intrenching upon the different persuasions of each party. Doubtless there may, if our Spirits be not at a greater distance than our Principles.

Supposing both the Agreements, and the Differences to be truly, and rightly stated, as to the main things in this which hath been said, as we suppose all that understand them will readily acknowledge, and the Agreements being so great and many, and the differences so few, that which we have to propose upon the whole is this.

Query.

Whether Union in so many great Truths, which in the Light and Grace of Christ, and in the Conduct of his Word and Spirit we have attained to, be not a sufficient foundation for three things more.

1. For a mutual owning and giving the right hand of Fellowship to each other as true Churches and Ministers of Jesus Christ, in whom something of his grace and presence doth appear, notwithstanding those lesser differences before mentioned.

2. And consequently to concern our selves in the Affairs of one

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another

another, so far as to give mutual Advice and Assistance as occasion may require. And,

3. To receive the Approved Members of each others Congregations to occasion all Communion in the Lords Supper.

Answer.

We humbly conceive with submission to better Judgments, that these Queries may be answered in the Affirmative, And that the greatnes of the Agreements, and the smallness of the differences before evinced by such a particular Induction, is a Basis and a ground work firm enough, whereon to demonstrate not only the possibility, but the necessity of our Uniting. Whereunto these Motives beside many others may persuade.

1. It cannot be denied, but that such as agree in all those great principles of Truth before mentioned, if also their Lives and Conversations be without offence are visible Saints, or Godly Persons in the Judgment of rational Charity. And certainly it is the duty of Saints to unite and come as near together as they can, and to receive one another, as Christ also received us to the Glory of God, *Rom. 15. 7.* Corrupt Associations and mixtures of Professors with Men visibly wicked and ungodly, the Scripture every where testifies against. But the Persons of whom we treat, are to humane Judgment, and to outward appearance, Saints, yea, Confessors and fellow-sufferers in the cause of Christ, than which there cannot be a greater Indearment.

2. If ever there be a time and season for it, wherein the Lord calls his people to it, to study Union and lamenting their former distances and offences, to seek peace and pursue it, surely it is at such a time, when he hath brought them all into a suffering Condition together, under the pressures and yokes of men upon upon their Consciences. It is time then to lay aside their mutual animosities, and to learn that *Golden Rule*, *Rom. 14. 3.* *Let not him that eateth, despise him which eateth not, and let not him which eateth not Judge him that eateth, for God hath received him.* A Golden

Golden Rule of Christian Love, the sense whereof may be thus rendered in the Aspect, it beareth to the disputations of our Times. Let not him that dependeth in the way of Classical subordination, despise him that dependeth not, and let not him that dependeth not Judge him that dependeth, for God hath received him.

3. There is no selling Truth to purchase peace. There is no such dead fly in the Ointment. There is no silencing or suppressing of any Truth of God by these Proposals, nor any tendency we hope to scepticism, or personal Indifferency in the things of his House and Worship, whereunto that good principle of tenderness and moderation towards Brethren of differing Judgments, hath been by some either unskillfully, or perversely misimproved. Which Form soever hath the mind of Christ, and the Truth on their side, here is nothing doth so far intrench upon them, but that they may freely hold it forth, they may retain and practise that wherein they differ, according to their present Convictions, notwithstanding this degree of Union, and so neither is any truth suppressed, nor any ones Conscience imposed upon.

4. Yea, if we could thus far unite, as it would conduce through the Grace of Christ to a further increase of Love, so likewise to the further discovery and clearing up of the Truth in those things wherein we differ, by vertue of that promise, Phil. 3. 15, 16: *If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you, nevertheless whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.*

5. It would in some measure remove that great stumbling block from before the blind prophane world, who pretend to take offence at our divisions, looking upon them in the multiplying Glasses of their own enmity, and so accounting every difference in Religion to be a different Religion. But who knows how Convincing this might be to them, according to the Lord's prayer for his Disciples, John. 17. 21, 23. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* Doubtless it will

Convince.

Convince such as belong to the Election of his Grace, so as to bring them in, and the rest will be left the more without excuse. And finally it will rejoice them that *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, and be pleasing unto him whose name is called upon us, and who hath so often Commanded us *To love one another*.

F I N I S.
